

Blackboard Collaborate – Some Tips For Moderators

This document gives some pointers for moderators starting out to use the Blackboard Collaborate (BbC) system with the Broadband For Seniors (BFS) / Adult Learning Australia (ALA) training sessions. Please direct any comments, alterations, suggestions etc to Keith at harvey45ATgmail.com

Like most new things, using BbC can be a bit daunting at first. However we've all experienced our first time anxiety and worries the first time we used it. **Please don't let this document frighten you away from using this excellent new system of delivery.** Always remember 'you'll never never know, unless you have a go!'

BbC is no different to all the other training systems in use whether they be face to face, an overhead projector, a whiteboard, an LCD projector or any other system – the same key principles still apply:

- Preparation is important. Don't be surprised if this takes many hours, particularly the early sessions.
- Have a reasonable grasp of the subject. Communication ability is the key. Subject 'experts' can often be some of the worst presenters.
- Make sure your session 'flows'; that one topic leads onto another in a logical fashion that your audience should be able to follow. I find it best to rough things out, have a day or so away from it, then come back to it. On return to my material I'm often struck with the thought 'Who was the idiot who wrote this!!!' ☺
- Have a practice run with the medium you are going to deliver with, in this case BbC
- Call on other moderators to assist you, both in preparation and on the day.



Tips for the preparation phase

Preparation Tips	How to do it
Rough out your session and then develop it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PowerPoint is great for this as you can easily move slides of ideas around to get a flow.• Open Office and Google Docs have equally good PowerPoint equivalents• The Outliner feature in MS Word is another great tool that many are unaware of.
Use the same principles as with PowerPoint	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any text on slides should be simple bullet point that summarise what you will explain.• Where possible use a simple graphic to make your point.• Do not use custom animation and slide transitions. They do not transfer to BbC.• Animated .gif graphic files can be used but you must add them in BbC and then save your presentation as a whiteboard file. They won't transfer from PowerPoint.
Design sessions to include interactivity and include variety of content and interaction in your session.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include features such as application sharing, Web tours, video, multimedia files, quiz manager, and breakout rooms to assist you in delivering your content.
Provide opportunities for participants to interact and collaborate with each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have questions (and answers) prepared in advance.• Decide how you want participants to respond – ie by smiley? Quiz? Whiteboard? Chat panel?
Practice before leading your first session.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The ALA room is almost always available• Your own personal Vroom is easy to get and FREE. http://try.bbcollaborate.com/trial/register.go• Enlist another moderator to try things with.• Log in again as a participant on a second computer. Then you can try stuff and see the results.

Preparation Tips	How to do it
Set aside some time to become familiar with the BbC interface. (Log into the BFS Room or use your own Vroom. Have a play, you can't break it – I've tried ☺)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participant and chat panels are detachable • All the BbC panels are resizable • These commands are on the drop down at the top right corner of the Participants panel (or the Tools menu): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change poll types (Y/N, A..C, A..D, A..E) • Put poll results on the whiteboard • Clear poll results (also 'Clear' text near the results) • Lower all hands • Other handy commands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigate slides and go to a specific slide • Use the whiteboard tools (see other handouts) • App share and return to the whiteboard (buttons above the whiteboard) • Save whiteboard files (File / Save / Whiteboard. Make sure to select the required file type) • Load a whiteboard file ('Load Content' button; or the File menu) • Force off someone's mic (small dropdown opposite that person, click audio twice.)
Become familiar with the session content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Winging It' on the day is bad. You will have enough to contend with operating the BbC system. • By all means have notes but avoid slavishly reading them. Just highlight key items and trust your brain.
Questions from participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage questions. They are great for participation. • Develop questions to ask your participants. • If you get a question that stumps you then 'fes up'. Never try to BS through. Ask the participants if anyone knows the answer or can suggest something.
Open Web pages, applications needed for application sharing and screen captures before the session begins.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apps to share must be on your primary monitor • Keep their window size down as small as practicable. Not all participants have hi-res large monitors.
Make use of the Copy and Paste keyboard commands Ctrl+C; Ctrl+V	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is anything you want to quickly add to the whiteboard or chat window then have it typed up in a text file. Have it open. Use copy and paste.
Save your presentation as a whiteboard file. Have it backed up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whiteboard files load fast . • You can include animated gif picture files. Simply drag them from Windows an onto the relevant BbC slide. Then save it all as a whiteboard file. • Back files up onto a USB stick or into Google Drive or Dropbox
Use a headset with a boom microphone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is by far the best sound setup and eliminates any acoustic feedback and echo when you are talking. • Quite cheap ones will work well. I use a \$15 set from BigW
Set your profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small dropdown at the right end of your name in the Participants panel. Or the Tools menu.
Do check out the web resources for the BbC system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.blackboard.com click on Platform / Collaborate and then Support
Handouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upload these to the wiki a day or so ahead. If you don't have access then ask another moderator to do it for you.
Delivery Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It needs to be quiet and free from interruptions • Do consider having a backup location and/or computer

Tips for 'On the Day'

Delivery Tips	How to do it
Find a comfortable place with no distractions to deliver the session.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn off all nearby phones, log out of Skype, tell others to only disturb you in an emergency. • Have a water bottle or glass handy. • RELAX!!!!
Check and alter any global variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the small dropdown menu at the top right corner of the Participants panel. If this is your first time then get one of the experienced moderators to change any for you. • I like to prevent participants using webcams. They soak up bandwidth and don't contribute.
Greet participants as they join your session.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New starters are quite nervous about the BbC system and what they might be called on to do – just like sitting in the first row of a hypnotists stage show!
Remind your participants to use the Audio Setup Wizard in order to test their microphone and speakers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio seems to give the most troubles for new starters. • Encourage them to practice using their microphone before the session starts. Ask them about the weather or what they have been doing.
Start on Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This respects those who came on, or before, time. • There are always latecomers. Don't reward them by delaying the start more than a couple of minutes.
Remember to start the recording	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I place the little recording dialog box on top of the slide advance buttons so I don't forget it. • Or ask another moderator to start the recording.
Explain the BbC interface and practices, in particular the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk button and how to use it • The Raise Hand button • The Smileys and Polling buttons • The chat window and how to use it • Any whiteboard controls you want used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To talk: SINGLE click and observe the blue mic symbol; talk; SINGLE click again to turn off. Many seniors, and not so senior, have the bad habit of double clicking on everything. • Make it clear to raise their hand if they want to speak. And to click the hand button again to lower their hand. • Smileys: Get them to give you one for practice. • Chat: Some have never used a chat system and are unaware to push the Enter key to send. Explain. Get them to type the town they are in.
Speak clearly and don't rush.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just use your normal conversational speech that you use to explain something. Do smile as you will sound more friendly and encouraging.
Ask questions and provide opportunity for interaction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you ask a question make sure to clearly explain how you want the response. ie Smileys? A Poll? On the Whiteboard? Chat window? Talk button?
Poll the class at various intervals to obtain their feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Smileys or a Poll. • Remember to clear voting responses after each poll.
Regularly scan the whole BbC interface, not just the whiteboard area. It's easy to get trapped by 'tunnel vision'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions are often asked in the chat window and easily missed by the moderator. Hopefully one of the other moderators will be on the ball and answer them or draw your attention to them. • If someone puts up their hand make sure to acknowledge it promptly. You don't have to cede the mic to them straight away. No different to someone putting their hand up in a training session.

Delivery Tips	How to do it
Encourage participants to respond and to raise their hands when they have a question or comment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is never a dumb question, except the one that doesn't get asked. Encourage them. • In answering thank them for the question and I prefer to summarise it back and then answer it. This ensures you've understood the question, gives listeners a second chance to hear it, and importantly, gives your sub conscious time to come up with an answer!
Use the whiteboard tools to assist you in your delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Highlighter to call attention to specific regions on the screen. (Hold down the pen tool)  • The hand or pointer to indicate which item you are talking about. You do need to click on the whiteboard so participants see the pointer. 
<p>App Sharing.</p> <p>'App' is short for Application – get with the buzz words!</p> <p>This is an excellent way of showing listeners what you are talking about. However there is a small delay and continual changes at your end can be quite distracting for viewers.</p> <p>To truly appreciate how app sharing will appear to your participants, use a second computer and log in as a participant. Try stuff and see the results.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are using 2 monitors, the App you want to share must be open on your primary monitor. • Try to keep the App window size to the minimum you need. Many participants may not have large monitors or high resolution settings. • I suggest having your App open and sized in advance • You will only see your App, not what they see. Ask participants to give you a smiley face if they can see it OK. • Avoid frequent scrolling, animation and video. It will be very jerky for participants. • If you do need to scroll then avoid using your mouses scroll wheel or dragging the slider. Try to use Page Up and Page Down using the keys or by clicking the light grey area in the scroll bar. • Make smooth, definite, mouse moves, avoid waving it around. • Minimize any resizing of the yellow app share area as this causes a refresh of your participants screens. This can happen automatically if any menus you open extend outside the yellow app share border.
At the end of the session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage final comments and questions . • Ask for ideas for future sessions. • Encourage others to have a go at presenting. Tell how you find it rewarding, easy to use any issues you had. • Mention the location of any handouts. Paste the link to them in the chat window. • Explain how people can save the slide set (File / Save / Whiteboard. Stress to select pdf as the filetype) • The same for the chat conversations (File / Save / Chat). • Mention how a link to the recording will shortly be sent out • Mention how a survey should popup when they exit. Ask them to take the time to respond. • If possible, hang around until the last person leaves.
Finale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pat yourself on the back for having a go. • Help yourself to ONE stiff drink. • Start work on your next presentation.

About microphones <http://sites.southseattle.edu/collaborate/resources/headset-mics>